

MSGNO 47 (STXX) *21/01/84* *09:07*
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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

STATE

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TOR: 201931Z JAN 84

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~~FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW~~
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4440
INFO RUEHIA/USIA WASHDC 6113
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1862
RUSBLK/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1236
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2738
RUEHILP/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 0025

BT

EZ1:

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 00714

EZ2:

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: UR, AF, PGOV, PINS

SUBJECT: SOVIETS PUBLISH PARTIAL ACCOUNT OF SALANG

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DISASTER

<> REF: 83 <><>KABUL<><> 405

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. THE JANUARY 14 EDITION OF KRASNAYA ZVEZDA CONTAINS
THE FIRST PUBLIC SOVIET ADMISSION THAT WE CAN RECALL
CONCERNING THE SALANG TUNNEL DISASTER (REFTEL). IN AN
ARTICLE BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL ENGINEER V. SYKHODOLSKIY
ABOUT HOW THE TUNNEL IS NOW OPERATING "LIKE CLOCKWORK,"

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THERE IS AN ACCOUNT OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH TOOK PLACE "APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR AGO." THE ARTICLE STATES THAT A TRUCK IN THE TUNNEL "STALLED" AND COULD NOT BE STARTED AGAIN. TRAFFIC WAS BLOCKED, BUT OTHER DRIVERS KEPT THEIR MOTORS RUNNING, OVERPOWERING THE TUNNEL'S VENTILATION SYSTEM. "TOXIC FUMES" SPREAD QUICKLY; "MANY" DRIVERS LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AND "SOME" DIED FROM SUFFOCATION. AFTER THIS ACCIDENT, THE ARTICLE STATES, THE AFGHANS ASKED THE SOVIETS FOR ASSISTANCE IN OPERATING THE TUNNEL.

3. ASIDE FROM THIS ACCOUNT, THE ARTICLE CONTAINS TWO OTHER INTRIGUING ADMISSIONS. THE FIRST IS THAT THE SALANG TUNNEL IS LITTLE USED AT NIGHT BECAUSE OF "ROBBERS." THE SECOND IS THAT "BANDITS" HAD AT SOME POINT ATTEMPTED TO SABOTAGE THE TUNNEL'S OPERATION BY DRIVING A MINED TRUCK INTO A COLUMN CARRYING EXPLOSIVES. THIS ATTEMPT, ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, DID NOT SUCCEED.

4. COMMENT: THE EMPHASIS OF THE ARTICLE IS ON THE FOND REMINISCENCES OF THE AUTHOR FOR SALANG AND HOW THE TUNNEL OPERATES "LIKE CLOCKWORK" (THIS PHRASE IS REPEATEDLY USED) WITH SOVIET HELP. PRESUMABLY, THE PARTIAL ADMISSION OF THE DISASTER (AS WELL AS OTHER TROUBLES) WAS INCLUDED IN THE ARTICLE TO DEMONSTRATE
<> THAT THE <><>SITUATION<><> WAS NO LONGER WORRISOME TO THE SOVIETS.

ZIMMERMANN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L